

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1064

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 3381

STADIS////////////////////////////////////

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y F O R T A G S A N D S U B J E C T

F O R D E P U T Y S E C R E T A R Y

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: -ASEAN

SUBJ: U.S. - ASEAN ECONOMIC CONSULTATIONS

REF: A) STATE 176399

B) MANILA 9701

C) SINGAPORE 2394

D) KUALA LUMPUR 3900

1. I AM IN FULL AGREEMENT WITH PROPOSALS TO HOLD U.S.-
ASEAN ECONOMIC CONSULTATIONS. I HAVE LONG BELIEVED, AS
EXPRESSED REF C, THAT WE HAVE DONE A VERY POOR JOB OF
CONSULTING WITH DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ON MAJOR ECONOMIC
ISSUES AND THAT IF WE ARE GOING TO WEAKEN THE GROWING
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SOLIDARITY OF THE SO-CALLED NON-ALIGNED GROUP, WE MUST

GIVE OUR ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIPS WITH THESE COUNTRIES A LOT MORE HIGH-LEVEL ATTENTION.

2. PERIODIC CONSULTATIONS WITH ASEAN SHOULD HELP ASEAN DEVELOP INTO A MORE COHESIVE AND EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION SINCE IT WOULD NECESSITATE CLOSER COORDINATION AND IN-DEPTH CONSULTATIONS WITHIN ASEAN IN PREPARATION FOR THEIR MEETINGS WITH US. THIS MIGHT HELP ACCELERATE ASEAN'S SLOW EVOLUTION TOWARD A MORE ACTIVE AND MEANINGFUL ORGANIZATION WHICH WOULD BE IN OUR INTEREST.

3. SUBSTANCE OF CONSULTATIONS SUGGESTED PARA 3, REF A, SEEMS APPROPRIATE. WE BELIEVE WE SHOULD AVOID ANY DISCUSSION OF AID OR POTENTIAL NEW REGIONAL PROJECTS. ADB AND OTHER MECHANISMS EXIST FOR THESE PURPOSES, AND I THINK OUR GETTING INTO SUCH DISCUSSIONS WITH ASEAN AS A GROUP WOULD BE UNPRODUCTIVE AND POSSIBLY DIVISIVE AND COULD CREATE FALSE EXPECTATIONS. WE SHOULD ALSO BE CAREFUL TO AVOID SUBJECTS WHICH HAVE POLITICAL OR SECURITY OVERTONES OR WHERE THERE IS A STRONG DIFFERENCE OF VIEWS WITHIN ASEAN - E.G. LOS.

4. FROM SINGAPORE'S POINT OF VIEW, THE SUBJECTS OF GREATEST INTEREST CURRENTLY ARE WORLD INFLATION AND THE MONETARY SITUATION. ENERGY, MTN AND GSP ARE ALSO OF GREAT INTEREST. SINGAPORE, WHILE WELCOMING MULTILATERAL DISCUSSIONS, WOULD ALSO APPRECIATE BILATERAL TALKS PARTICULARLY ON SUBJECTS WHERE ITS INTERESTS MIGHT BE SUBMERGED IN LARGER ASEAN CONTEXT.

5. TIMING OF CONSULTATIONS IMMEDIATELY AFTER PASSAGE OF OUR TRADE BILL WOULD GIVE US AN EXCELLENT SUBJECT TO FOCUS ON. THIS COULD BE THE SPECIFIC SUBJECT AROUND WHICH BROADER GENERAL DISCUSSIONS COULD BE BUILT AS SUGGESTED BY AMBASSADOR UNDERHILL, REF D.

6. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT WE ARE MORE LIKELY TO GET ASEAN TO AGREE TO THESE CONSULTATIONS IF IT WERE TO APPEAR - AND IN FACT BE - AN ASEAN INITIATIVE, WHICH WE COULD QUIETLY STIMULATE. THE GOS MIGHT QUESTION U.S. MOTIVES IN
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MAKING THE PROPOSAL, FEARING PERHAPS THAT WE WANT TO INSTITUTIONALIZE SOME KIND OF RELATIONSHIP WITH ASEAN WHICH WOULD CHANGE ITS CHARACTER AND CONFLICT WITH SINGAPORE'S NON-ALIGNED STANCE. THESE FEARS AND SUSPICIONS WOULD BE REDUCED IF THIS WERE AN ASEAN INITIATIVE ORIGINATING PERHAPS FROM MALIK. CONTRARY TO THE VIEW EXPRESSED IN REF B, SINGAPORE WOULD NOT BE CONCERNED IF THE INITIATIVE CAME FROM INDONESIA. SINGAPOREANS ARE QUITE REALISTIC IN

ACCEPTING THE INEVITABLE LEADERSHIP ROLE OF INDONESIA.
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